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CHARACTERISTIC FORMS OF THE LAKE DISTRICT FLORA.

BY S. ARMITT.

BROADLY speaking, the variety of plant forms in this region characterises it rather than any particular plant or plants. There are whole sets of flowers to be gathered here instead of one set; there are the loveliest flowers of the highest regions—the Alpine plants; there are the lake plants, the bog plants, the limestone plants, and on the outermost skirts of the district there are the sea-shore plants. All these, as well as the common flowers that are spread over the length and breadth of the land are here, and here abundantly; and each of these sets has its own characteristic forms. The mountains here give us the flowers of every height, from the Arctic flora to that of the deeply-indented coast. Nevertheless, it is easy to give the names of two or three plants only that perfectly localise their habitat. *Salix herbacea* and *Lobelia Dortmanna* are enough, or *Carex rigida* and *Isoetes lacustris*. *Salix herbacea* and *Carex rigida* are the most Arctic of the plants of the Lake flora, and these mountain tops being the only part of England which rises to their zone, each of the two localises the region where it grows as far as England is concerned. To differentiate the place from Scotland, one needs to bracket with them some of the purely English or southern forms that do not reach so far north as the Scotch hills. *Pyrus Malus*, the Crab, would suffice, or *Serratula tinctoria*, or *Valeriana dioica*. Hence one could express the Lake District in unmistakeable botanical terms as the habitat of—

Salix herbacea -		*Carex rigida.*
Lobelia Dortmanna -	or,	*Isoetes lacustris.*
Pyrus Malus - -		*Valeriana dioica.*

—and in either case the middle term might be omitted and be equally true and exact.

Again, the Lake country might be described as the meeting-place of southern and northern plants, since the

catalogue of its flora embraces 231 southern or English plants and 125 northern or Scottish plants, only that this description would apply equally well to North Yorkshire as well as to the Northumberland and Durham district, with only some little difference in the respective numbers. The whole number of our flowering plants is only 850 (out of the old total of the 1,425 British plants before the great augmentation of the new London catalogue).

The Northumberland and Durham district is the richer by some 40 species, and North Yorkshire by nearly 100 species. The great deficiency is, perhaps, in cornfield weeds, since wheat is not grown and oats only sparsely. Cultivation does not here reach to the top of the agrarian zone of 1,800 feet, but scarcely more than half that height, consequently the crowd of plants that follow always the footsteps of men are here a zone or half-a-zone below their normal limits, and therefore the agrarian flora is considerably smaller than on the eastern side of the island.

To note first the superficially characteristic features of the flora, such as any passing traveller might note mentally as he went quickly by. The Wych-elm is one of the most frequent trees of the roads, while the English Elm is absent. Oak is plentiful; Hazel is commonest of the wild trees; Alder follows the stream side high up the hills; Birch frequents the cliffs, much higher still; the Rowan is one of the commonest and most ornamental trees, both on slate and limestone, and it climbs highest of all, excepting only the Juniper; the Beech exists only in the lower region where planted. Of planted trees, the Larch predominates in numbers, and in the height of its range. Juniper is the evergreen shrub of the open moorland, on both limestone and slate, throughout the district. The Yew is frequent, and forms a feature of the landscape, even to passengers by rail as they enter the Lake region through the outermost girdle of limestone hills by Morecombe Bay; its sombre enduring foliage makes dark patches on the pale grey of the horizontal stratifications that are visible for miles. On the slate hills, too, the Yew flourishes, and has given rise to a number of place names:—Yew-dale, near Coniston; Yew Crag, at Seatoller, and another at Ulswater; Yewbarrow, at Wastdale; again near Grange, and another opposite Whitbarrow. The finest of these trees in his time were immortalised by Wordsworth, but storms have destroyed some of the oldest recently.

The wild Cherry-trees are conspicuous features of the woods twice a year; in spring, when their wealth of white flowers makes them visible for miles, and again in autumn, when the pink foliage acts in a like manner.

Daffodils border the western shore of Windermere in early March, where they are truly wild. In June the meadows are purple with *Geranium sylvaticum*, later on the same fields are crowded with the handsome dark heads of Great Burnet (*Sanguisarba officinalis*), more abundant and general in the Lake country than in other places. On damp evenings mountain pastures are scented strongly with Sweet Cecily (*Myrrhis odorata*). The Giant Bell flower (*Campenula labifolia*) is plentiful. *Paris quadrifolia* is frequent in lower thickets. *Galeum boreale* is a Highland plant of moist rocks by lake side; Globe flower, also, which runs up rocky glens. Cow-wheat carpets woods profusely. Sheepsbit (*Jasione montana*) abounds in dry places. There are many St. John's worts, one may gather half-a-dozen in half-a-day's ramble. There is the slender one (*Hypericum pulchrum*), the trailing one, the square-stalked one, the hairy one, and *Hypericum perforatum*, which is alone *the* St. John's wort, with the shrub-like *Tutsan H. Androsæmum*, and these are only the commoner ones. On river banks trails lovely Moneywort (*Lysimachia nummularia*); the smaller flowered *L. nemorum* (the Yellow Pimpernel) frequents damp woods. The large upright *L. vulgaris* (Yellow Loosestrife) borders the larger lakes, in company with the splendid spikes of Purple Loosestrife, of quite another family, *Lythrum salicaria*.

The water of the lakes has its own special flora—Water-lilies, Reedmaces, Bulrushes, Great Reeds, Reed Grasses, Lobelia, Quillwort, Shoreweed, Pondweeds, Hornwort, *Eleocharis palustris*, *Polygonum amphilium*, *Myrophillum*, *Carices*, too many to enumerate.

The watery places on the fells have another set of inhabitants—Bog myrtle, Bog asphodel, Bog bean, Bog orchis, Grass of Parnassus, Arrow grass, Marsh Cinquefoil, *Rhyncospora alba*, and the smaller Carices, such as *C. dioica* and *C. pulicaris*. Four *Lycopodiums* may be gathered without difficulty, two others are hidden away in their own special

spots. All three Bladderworts inhabit moorland pools, and one of them, *Utricularia intermedia*, is a local plant. Butterwort is very abundant, and Sundews live on Sphagnum bosses. The water-falls have their filmy ferns. The glens about Stock Ghyll are perhaps the only true homes of *Impatiens Noli-me-tangera*.

The Alpine flowers are a little world in themselves, which may be divided into two parts—the lower Alpines that are pretty general, and such as all wanderers on the fells and nature lovers can see for themselves, and the higher ones that are much rarer and occur only on special spots and known only to the initiated. Of the first set the Alpine Ladies' Mantle is one of the most characteristic forms; it is very abundant on all the higher slate hills and confined to them, being absent from the encircling limestone. This is the more noteworthy that it is absent also from Northumberland and Durham, and only occurs in one spot in Yorkshire, where the Silurian rocks just enter the bounds of the county. *Primula farinosa* is another of the lower Alpines; its pink, long-stemmed umbels are widely spread through the swampy fields of the lower fells; it is of intermediate range, living on the hills of South Scotland and North England only. *Saxifraga aizoides* and *S. stellaris* are of the lower Alpine zone, with *Cochlearia alpina* and the characteristic mosses *Bartramia fontana* and *Bryum pseudo triquetrum*. The whole district is rich in mosses, its humid atmosphere seems to suit them, and they are simply everywhere, on trees and stones and walls and roofs; undisturbed they would cover everything up. Lichens, too, are plentiful of their various sorts, crustaceous, foliaceous and fruticose. To return to the Alpines, the higher ones are perhaps the true specialities of the district, such as *Oxyria remiformis*, *Saxifraga oppositifolia* and *S. nivalis*, *Cerastum alpinum*, *Lychnis alpina*, etc. They are, I believe, little seen by anyone; they exist only on certain small areas that are high up, quite unknown and unattainable to most people, while the specialists who want them go rather to the Scotch Alps, where they are more numerous in species as well as more abundant than here.